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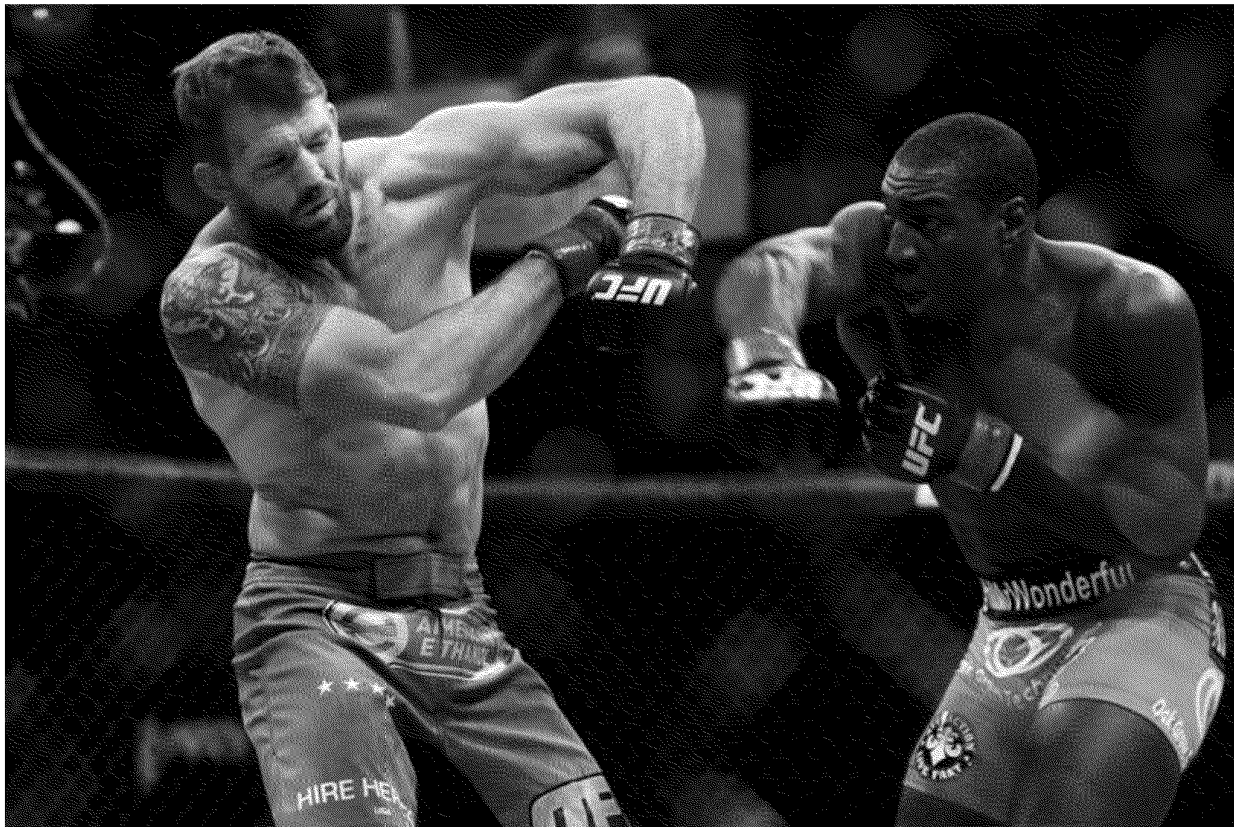
**MMA Fighting article titled
“Phil Davis would have liked
to stay with the UFC – for
‘big contract’”**



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Phil Davis would have liked to stay with the UFC -- for 'big contract'

By Marc Raimondi [3] @marc_raimondi [4] on Apr 20, 2015, 4:00p



Esther Lin, MMA Fighting

Phil Davis [6] signing with Bellator MMA was strictly a business decision.

The former UFC light heavyweight star told Ariel Helwani on Monday's edition of *The MMA Hour* that he preferred the offer Bellator gave him over the one the UFC did -- so he inked a deal with Bellator. It was as simple as that. The signing was made official last week.

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"I have nothing but gratitude for those guys," Davis said of the UFC. "I would have liked to sign the big contract and stay with the UFC, sure. That was my first option. But as more options became available, I went with other options. It's hard to look at it emotionally. I'm entirely looking at it as a business move."

Davis went into his fight with Ryan Bader [7] at UFC on FOX 14 [8] in January with only one bout left on his contract. Before the fight, the UFC offered him a contract extension, but Davis turned it down. He wanted to test his value on the open market. Davis ended up losing to Bader by split decision in Stockholm.

"In some ways I felt like the gamble didn't pay off," Davis said. "I was like, 'Aw crap, it might ruin everything.' But on the other hand, I kind of live by faith and God puts me exactly where he wants to me to be. I try not to worry about the details of life too much either way."

The offer the UFC gave him before the fight still stood afterward. Davis, though, preferred to dip his toe into the free-agent market. Bellator emerged as a contender and, simply, that organization offered him a better contract than the UFC did.

"It's like anything," Davis said. "Fighting is a job for me. I love it, but at the same time it pays the bills.

"There were other things other than money. But then again, the fight game is simple. I fight for money. It's like anything. That's what I do."

Davis (13-3, 1 NC) said he has no ill will toward the UFC, nor is he upset about the way things went down. The 30-year-old is trying not to make things personal at all.

"Moving to Bellator is not an opportunity where you say I'm disappointed in anything," Davis said. "If I was working for FedEx and UPS offered me a better job, then you go to UPS. The only thing that brings up hurt feelings is I have a lot of friends and family that work for the UFC, the people of the organization that I won't be able to see on a regular basis. That's simply it. There's no hurt feelings any other way. That's one of the things that happen in life, ya know?"

Davis is still regarded as one of the best light heavyweights in the world. Before falling to Bader, the former Penn State wrestling national champion, had just one loss in his previous six fights. Davis owns notable wins over the likes of Alexander Gustafsson [9], Glover Teixeira [10] and Lyoto Machida [11].

"Mr. Wonderful," a dominant wrestler and strong grappler, might not have the most exciting style in MMA, but simply put he's one of the biggest Bellator signings yet. Davis would like to go right in and fight Liam McGeary [12] for the Bellator light heavyweight belt.

"I kind of want a title shot right off the bat," he said. "I wouldn't say deserve. Deserve is a strong word. I'm not gonna tell anybody what I deserve."

Currently, several former fighters have an antitrust lawsuit pending against the UFC. The argument is that there is not a free market out there and fighters have no leverage -- the UFC is the only game in town and Bellator is only a "minor league."

Davis' move somewhat goes counter to that, though there can be an argument that if the UFC truly wanted to sign him, it could have blown him away with an offer.

"I would never want anyone in any job to feel confined to only working that job," Davis said. "If you're in sports, especially in the fight game, definitely go after the best offer. Shoot for the stars. As fighters, you definitely want to, especially if you perform well, you want to get compensated well. At the end of your career, you don't want to say, 'I should have done this, I should have done that.'"

That's why Davis has no regrets about how things played out. For the most part, he controlled his own destiny.

"Security is a myth," Davis said. "Security is a mirage. There is no security in the fight game. There is no security. You have a bad performance, you can be cut. It's as simple as that."

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